



*Harvest Fest at the DC General Family Shelter featuring Mr. Winnie the Pooh*

## Help Bring the Homeless in DC Inside From the Cold

The hypothermia season has begun, and the District has launched an aggressive campaign to bring the homeless inside from the cold. Shelter addresses as well as pick up times and locations will be displayed on and in several Metro buses, and cards containing this

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information can be found in many locations throughout the city. This issue of the *Vine* will focus on homelessness. We are proud to feature one of the champion service providers of this community-



Miriam's Kitchen, and the great work they do in feeding and caring for the homeless in DC.

We'll also talk about homeless diversion. Many families are avoiding shelter placement because of the great work of our staff at the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center.

These trained specialists are often able to negotiate safe, stable alternatives for families facing housing instability, and share strategies for remaining housed.

In case you missed it, the Department of Human Services (DHS) hosted a TANF partner consortium symposium to enable collaboration among all of our service providers. You can find coverage of that event in this publication.

On another note, it is with great sadness that DHS said farewell to the former Administrator for the Family Services Administration, Fred Swan. We wish him well in his new endeavors, and he will be greatly missed by his constituents, employees, this Agency, and this city.

**I invite you to enjoy the second edition of the *Vine* newsletter, and remember--*help bring the homeless in DC in from the cold.***

*Sincerely,  
David Berns  
Director, DHS*

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# Miriam's Kitchen

## *Where DC's Homeless Are Offered More Than Just a Meal*



*Above, Sarahe Butler, Miriam's kitchen customer.  
Below, a volunteer begins preparing dinner.*

Around the time President Ronald Reagan introduced his "Star Wars" plan, "Laverne and Shirley" aired its last episode, and the entire world seemed to be dancing to the tunes of Michael Jackson's 37-week-hit album, "Thriller," Miriam's Kitchen opened its doors to

begin feeding people in the District; particularly, the homeless.

Meals like Stuffed Bell Peppers with Risotto are fairly common at Miriam's, where clients also participate in Art Therapy and have access to case management services. "Whatever services we can bring here, we try and do so because many homeless people are very private, and very guarded, and are more apt to get help if it's offered here in the dining room," said Bob Glennon, Director of Social Services.



Miriam's Kitchen customer Sarahe Butler says she became homeless in 2011 when her Arizona apartment burned in a fire. She moved to the District, and stayed with her sister and brother-in-law briefly, but was displaced again when the couple separated. "Miriam's [Kitchen] has been great. They helped me get a D.C. license and helped me to go see a doctor. It's more than just the food and the meals, they really care here," she offered.

Case management services at Miriam's Kitchen can include access to on-site mental health care services provided by a staff psychologist, medical attention from on-site health care provider Unity Health, and a plethora of other services. To learn more visit here: <http://www.miriamskitchen.org/>.

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# Urgency and Hope: A TANF Re-Design Success Story



*Kino Grant speaks to the crowd about his success story at the TANF Partnership Symposium Consortium in October.*

***"I'm not even supposed to be here."***

According to his doctors, Kino Grant should have been dead by the age of 12. The oven cleaner he swallowed at age two, that caused him to be removed from his mother, had eaten away most of his insides.

Doctors performed multiple surgeries to "re-make" his internal organs, but for a while the prognosis was not a good one. Grant credits the foster mother he would meet while recovering in the hospital for his miraculous defiance of medical science; and he has been defying fate ever since.

Grant graduated from Cardozo Senior High School in 1993. By the time he was 29 years-old, he had two sons and a daughter, and a sad set of circumstances led to his obtaining full custody of the children. Without a job or any source of income, Grant visited the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC) in January for assistance with housing.

"As a single father, I didn't know where to turn. I knew of many programs for single mothers, but not fathers. I just went searching for answers," said Grant.

His case coordinators at VWFRC gave Grant a work readiness assessment, facilitated his enrollment with the TANF, Medicaid and SNAP (food stamp) programs, and assigned him with a work readiness TANF Employment Provider, America Works.

Grant says he made the most of every opportunity presented by America Works and kept an open mind. "Every time I went in there [America Works] and every time they sent me on an interview I

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### ***Urgency and Hope continued***

dressed for the job I wanted. I realized that they could only do so much and the rest was up to me,” Grant proclaimed. He was hired as a security officer three months after being assigned with America Works, and plans to go back school to increase his work readiness skills.

“Last year my kids and I had nothing—I mean nothing. In just one year, I have gotten a full-time job, bought a little ride, and the kids and I have moved into a three bedroom house,” gushed a happy Grant.

## **Homeless Diversion: Keeping Families Housed**

When Michael Owens\* got into a disagreement with his landlord and faced eminent eviction, he visited the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC) seeking help for he and his daughters. Owens assumed he and his children were headed for a shelter, but were surprised and grateful when VWFRC Case Manager Horace Kirby called the landlord and negotiated time for his family to stay long enough to find and move to a new place.

VWFRC is the central point of intake for families facing homelessness. Danette Lawrence, Supervisor, Critical Response Team at VWFRC says that the use of diversion strategies is very important particularly with families. “Shelter is only a place that should be accessed if someone is completely disconnected from the community,” said Lawrence.

“Some think that we use diversion strategies because we don’t want to serve people. We use diversion techniques because people are better served when they can stay connected with their communities. Families are better able to change their circumstances when they are surrounded by traditional supports, such as family” Lawrence added. [Continued on page 7.](#)

\* Customer’s name has been changed to protect his identity.

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# DC Link: 21st Century Health and Human Services



*DC Link Technology lead conferences with her technical support team via on-line technology.*

The District of Columbia has long been on the forefront of health care reform implementation, and was one of only two states to expand Medicaid coverage early. DC Health Link, the District's implementation of the Affordable Care Act, has been very successful in filling

the void for many of the District's uninsured residents.

As of October 1, 2013, DHS staff who currently process new Medicaid applications in ACEDS began to process them in the new DC Link eligibility system. In future years, as DC Link expands the list of programs it supports, DHS's role with DC Link will also expand. In September 2014, for example, ACEDS will be retired and DHS staff will use DC Link to assist customers with many Human Services programs such as TANF and SNAP.

In addition to receiving help from DHS staff, customers will be able to:

- Use DC Health Link themselves (all one needs is access to the internet).
- Receive in-person help from "Assisters" and "Brokers", who will either be certified (Assisters) or licensed (Brokers).
- Phone the new "DC Health Link Contact Center" to receive help in using DC Health Link.

For those having trouble accessing the DC Health Link web ([www.dchealthlink.com](http://www.dchealthlink.com)) Assisters, Brokers, and the DC Health Link Contact Center—(855) 532-5465—will help with both the eligibility process and enrolling eligible customers in private health plans. Note that DHS staff will only help with the eligibility process.

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# Updates from the Interagency Council on Homelessness

Wednesday, October 17, 2013 - Approximately 150 homeless advocates, community service providers, DC residents and government agency directors convened at the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) meeting at the 801 East Shelter. The bi-monthly meeting was held to discuss the FY2014 Winter Plan and the Annual Plan for the ICH, which featured key strategies to better assist homeless individuals, families and youth.



*Members of the ICH Committee meet to discuss the annual Winter Plan to address homelessness in DC.*

Several important announcements were made, including the City's participation in a 100-day initiative to get 225 homeless veterans housed and a new Executive Director of the ICH position, which will be posted on the DCHR website in the near future.

Agency directors who make up part of the ICH body also shared their individual strategies to push the ICH objectives forward. Strategies included getting housing for at least 300 new families; developing 80-150 new housing units; and rapid rehousing for youth who age out of the foster care system.

To learn more about the ICH and its initiatives, visit here <http://ich.dc.gov/>.

## Homeless Diversion: Keeping Families Housed continued

Other homeless diversion strategies used by the team at VWFRC include offering food stamps, energy assistance and other temporary support to family members to offset the costs of providing housing for families in need of placement. Homeless Service Specialists also negotiate with friends and loved ones on behalf of customers at risk of housing instability.

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# Swan in Flight

## *DHS Bids Farewell to Family Services Administrator Fred Swan*



*Former FSA Administrator Fred Swan with Mayor Vincent C. Gray*

One-by-one they lined up. Mayor Vincent C. Gray, Ward I Councilmember Jim Graham, City Administrator Allen Lew, a host of social service providers, colleagues, friends, family, and people who became like family; all to say farewell to Family Services Administrator Fred Swan.

“The District is losing a champion in the fight against homelessness, and he shall surely be missed,” said Mayor Gray regarding Swan. “Fred and I serve on the Interagency Council for Homelessness together, and I am ever impressed by his knowledge and compassion for homeless services in the District,” said City Administrator Allen Lew.

Swan, a licensed social worker, joined the DHS Family Services Administration (FSA) on May 29, 2007 as the Administrator. Prior to accepting this position, he was the Associate Deputy Director of Resident Services with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City after serving with the DC Housing Authority, Office of Resident Services.

During his tenure at DHS, Swan had the responsibility of managing FSA which grew from a staff of about 70 to a team of 100, and consists of the following programs: Adult Protective Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Office of Teen Parent Assessment, Strong Families Program Division, Office of Community Services Block Grant, and Homeless Services.

At the farewell celebration for Swan, many told of his selfless acts on behalf of homeless services. Most notable, was a story of how he drove through a blizzard with the belated Pat Handy to personally bring homeless people inside from the cold. Swan now serves as the Director of Resident Services for the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County.

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# Tidbits...

## DC General Family Shelter Hosts Harvest Fest for Kids



A knight in shining armor, witches, warlocks, and butterflies to boot—the Harvest Fest at DC General was a spectacular display of the children’s imaginations.

# HELP

BRING THE **HOMELESS** IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN FROM THE COLD



If you or someone you know is homeless call the Shelter Hotline for assistance. The hotline is available 24-hours a day.

**SHELTER HOTLINE**

**1.800.535.7252**

OR **311**

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## DHS Hosts Partnership Consortium Symposium

On Friday, October 18, 2013, the Department of Human Services (DHS) hosted the first annual "TANF Partnership Consortium: "Strengthening Families through Collective Collaboration" Symposium at 441 Judiciary Square.

The Symposium allowed participants the opportunity to focus on various aspects of the TANF Redesign and served as a conduit for open communication and collaboration among current and new vendors, partners, stakeholders and the community.



*Symposium participants develop an Individual Responsibility Plan as part of the learning activities.*

## DHS and Stakeholders Cut the Ribbon on Renovated 2100 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Space



On Friday, October 4, 2013, DC Mayor Vincent C. Gray, Department of Human Services Director (DHS) David Berns, Department of General Services (DGS) Deputy Director for Construction Services June Locker,

and DHS staff, volunteers and customers celebrated the opening of the newly renovated DHS facility at its Southeast location.

"Many of our residents will embark on a new journey in their own personal lives starting right here, so it's only fitting that the journey begins in a new, inviting, modernized space," said Mayor Gray.

The Family Resource Center is the centralized location for work readiness assessments for recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). It also provides counseling and case coordination for customers who have severe barriers to work.

To see excerpts from the ribbon cutting visit here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LH-YoR5mRA>

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